Chapter One

Religion and Morality

In the first chapter, I would like to give a brief introduction on what religion and morality are with critical assessment of their definitions and their origins.

This opening chapter discusses on the various definitions of Religion given by different scholars. Discussion are also made on the two main definitions of morality so as to bring out a clearer understanding by way of Descriptive morality which refers to some codes of conduct put forward by a society or, some other group, such as a religion, or accepted by an individual for his/her own behaviour and Normative morality which refers to a code of conduct that, given specific conditions, would be put forward by all rational persons.

Critical examinations and discussions are also analyzed on the relationship and distinctions of religion and morality on the following headings: Can Morality be understood without Religion? Is Religion being a visible Character of Morality Inappropriate? Religion and Morality: Related or Unrelated?
A. What is Religion?

What is religion? Why is man so eager and interested to study and know religion? What is religion after all? These questions remind us of St. Augustine’s quote about time:

*If you do not ask me what time is, I know. If you ask me, I do not know.*

It seems the same with religion. Everybody knows what religion is before you ask them. But if you ask them what religion is, they will find it very hard to designate.

One might say, ‘Religion means believing in God’. Another might say, ‘Religion is leading a good life’. Another would like to say, ‘Religion is some kind of profound inner experience.’ Another would say, ‘Religion brings people together in a society and binds them together to worship sincerely in a certain way, for the sake of material and spiritual well-being’. There are many things included in the word ‘Religion’ which is like a phenomenon: celebration, despair, ethical vigour, mystic retreat, social activism or actions, monastic quietude, contemplation, animal sacrifice, rituals; involving pain and error, images of hope, signs and symbols of fear, the affirmation of life and the struggle against death, creative growth, unthinking superstition and so on. We could see the qualitative diversity among the kinds of phenomena that we tend to call religion within a single geographical area at a given segment of time.¹

Religion comes out of life and can never be divorced from it. The root meaning of religion is something which binds men together and which binds the loose ends of impulses, desires and various processes of each individual. Hence, it is an integrative experience of men collectively and individually. There are many forms of religion, but there is one underlying factor in all of them. They are all occupied with the task of living and adjustment to the various demands of life and society.  

In setting out an inquiry into what religion exactly is, we shall have to start with certain assumptions. The first principle assumption is that, religion is a growth which is perennial and that its evolution has gone on obeying the primary laws of human progress. To enquire into anything means to know how it has come to be and what it is and for this purpose one has to trace its history up to the root, and in order to trace its process of evolution it is necessary to define it. There are some scholars who maintain that religion is an intellectual activity. They say that there is only one way in which men can come to believe in higher things and that is by an intellectual process. This idea divorces from religion the practical side of religion which consists chiefly in worship. Belief and worship are inseparable sides of religion. Some others say that the basis of all religion is in the inscrutableness of the power which the universe manifests to us. This definition traces religion to the inadequacy in man’s knowledge. It shows a negative rather than a positive element in man’s experience. There is an absence of the practical ideas of worship and belief in this definition. Some other scholars have explained religion as the action of the curiosity or an impulse of the human mind, which prompts man to investigate the causes of things, particularly the first cause of all things. But this does not tell us what exactly religion is. This curiosity or the impulse to know is not religion. It belongs to the domain of philosophy. Religion is something more than curiosity. No definition of religion can be regarded as complete in which the motive of worship is left undetermined. Religion is still in the process of growing and until the growth is complete an adequate definition of religion cannot be found. We shall, therefore, have to satisfy ourselves with an elementary definition of religion which is “Religion is a worship of higher powers from a sense of need”. Though this appear to be a very modest definition yet if we consider its implications we would find that it is not so. In the first place it implies an element of belief in the existence of higher powers with which there would be no worship. This is the intellectual factor of religion. In the second place there must be a conviction that these powers which are worshipped are higher. It is the sense of incapacity of an individual to supply his own needs which evoke in him a belief in the existence of higher power and he, therefore, keeps up intercourse with these powers by offering worship to them. In the third place these higher powers are worshipped with the object of cultivating a relation with them. In every act of worship there is an impulse that the Being addressed is supreme and mightier than the worshipper. Belief in higher 

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powers, and the worship offered to them do not, alone constitute religion; faith arising from the sense of need must also be there. These three together—feeling, belief and will—constitute religion both in the lowest and in the highest form of civilization. Even a savage living in the entire isolation and buffeted by chance from misery to happiness will not seek benefit from his God without some sense of attachment.3

Religion is something which must be realized and experienced not defined. However, many definitions have been proposed, some of them are phenomenological, trying to state which is common to all the acknowledged forms of religion; for example, religion is “human recognition of a superhuman controlling power and especially of a personal God or gods entitled to obedience and worship”. Others are interpretive. Thus there are psychological definitions— for example, “the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine”. Others are sociological— for example, “a set of beliefs, practices and institutions which men have evolved in various societies”. Others again are naturalistic— for example, “body of scruples which impede the free exercise of our faculties”. Yet others are religious definitions of religion— for example, “Religion is the recognition that all things are manifestation of a power which transcends our knowledge”.4 The word “religion” does not have a single correct meaning but that the many phenomena under it are related in the way that the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein has characterized as family resemblance. His own example was the word “game.” You cannot define a game as being played for pleasure, or as being competitive, or as requiring skill, or indeed it would seem by any single feature. Yet all these different kinds of game overlap in character with some other kinds, which in turn overlap in different ways with yet other kinds, so that the whole ramifying collection hangs together in a complex network of similarities and differences which Wittgenstein linked to the resemblances and differences, appearing within a family. We may apply Wittgenstein’s idea to the word “religion.” Perhaps there is no one characteristic of everything that can be called a religion but rather a set of “family resemblances.” In much religion there is the worship of a God or gods; but in Theravada Buddhism, for example, there is not. Again, religion often makes for social cohesion; yet in some strands it is aptly characterized. Again, religion often makes for the inner harmony of the individual; yet some of the greatest innovators seemed to their contemporaries to be unbalanced and even insane. The family resemblance model allows for such differences. It allows us to acknowledge the similarities as well as the difference between more standard examples of religion.5

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5 Ibid. p.3.
1. Origin of the word

‘Religion’, the English word, has been in use since the 13th century, taken from Anglo-French *religiun* (11th century), ultimately from the Latin word ‘religio’ originally meant ‘obligation’ ‘bond’.

The ultimate origins of the term Latin ‘religio’ are obscure. One possibility is the derivation from a reduplicated le-ligare which means ‘bind, connect’; likely from a prefixed re-ligare, that is re (again) + ligare or ‘to reconnect, an interpretation traced to Cicero connecting lego "read", that is re (again) + lego in the sense of ‘choose’, ‘go over again’ or ‘consider carefully’. This interpretation is favored by modern scholars such as Tom Harpur and Joseph Campbell, but was made eminent by St. Augustine, adopting the interpretation of Lactantius. From the 15th century onwards the term ‘religion’ came to be used for ‘Monastic life’. ‘Religious practices’ emerged from this century, but the word’s standard modern meaning did not develop until as recently as the 16th century.7

According to the philologist Max Muller, the root of the English word ‘religion’, the Latin term ‘religio’, was originally used to mean only ‘reverence for God or the gods, careful pondering of divine things, piety’ (which Cicero further derived to mean

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6 Religion from Wikipedia, encyclopedia.
7 Religion from word History.com
‘diligence’).

Many languages in the world have words that can be equated to ‘Religion’, but they use them in a very different way, and some have no word for religion at all.

2. Defining Religion

Defining the word ‘religion’ is fraught with difficulty. Nearly everyone has some idea, perhaps some mental picture, to go with the word, if anyone tries to turn that idea or picture into a clear comprehensive definition, however, the task may be surprisingly difficult. Time and again one may feel one has pushed and pulled one’s words until they neatly package the picture and wrap up what in human experience ought to be labeled religion. There are odd corners sticking out, the definer has failed to deal with the tribal rain dance which surely looks like religion but seemingly has nothing to do with the ultimate salvation, or with the Buddhist sutra chanting of robed monks in incense-laden temples which look like religion but seemingly has nothing to do with god.

Many people focus on a very narrow definition that matches the individual's own religion. It is apparent that religion can be seen as a theological, philosophical, anthropological, sociological, and psychological phenomenon of human kind. To limit religion to only one of these categories is to miss its multifaceted nature and lose out on the complete definition.

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Religion seems to mean so many different things to people in different parts of the world. In fact it is a permeating feature of the continuing history of mankind. To some it is a superstitious barrier of man’s progress, to others it is their most constructive activity providing an ultimate meaning to the projects of their culture.

Though it is complex to give a clear cut definition of religion, for the benefit of the discussion, here are few definitions which will give us a broader view of the word ‘religion’ with an open end.

Talal Asad states that ‘Religion is a collection of cultural systems, belief systems, and worldviews that establishes symbols that relate humanity to spirituality and moral values’\(^\text{10}\). Macgregor goes a step further to define that ‘Religion is a commitment to a kind or quality of life that purports to recognize a source beyond itself (usually but not necessarily called God) and thus issues in recognizable fruits in human conduct, culture and thought’\(^\text{11}\). Marxism defined Religion on the basis of social Revolution and says that ‘man is the beginning of Religion, He is the center of religion and he is the end of religion’.

Karl Marx made a critical statement stating “Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature the sentiments of the heartless world, the soul of the soulless conditions, it is the


opium of the people”.\textsuperscript{12} Till date this statement made by Karl Marx is considered drastic, negative and an extremist approach towards defining religion by thousands of religious people and numerous scholars.

Religion is thought of as the experience of individual by some people. To William James, religion means the feeling, acts and experiences of individuals in solitude, as they stand in relation to whatever they consider divine.

Describing religion in terms of its social function, Edward Ames says that it is the consciousness of the highest social values. American sociologists, Glock and Stark, observe five distinct qualities in religious persons: “Experiential, ideological (beliefs), ritualistic, intellectual (knowledge about the basic tenets of the faith and its scriptures), and consequential (the implications for practical conduct).”\textsuperscript{13} Ninian Smart defines religion comprehensively in terms of six dimensions – doctrinal, mythological, ethical, ritual, experiential and social.\textsuperscript{14} The anthropologist Clifford Geertz writes that religion, as a cultural system consists of sacred symbols which “synthesize a people ethos – the tone, character and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood and their world view.”\textsuperscript{15} Max Muller takes into consideration the intellectual and intuitive faculty of religion when he says, “religion is a mental faculty or disposition which, independent of

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\item \textsuperscript{12} Jacob Needleman ,A.K Bierman, James A. Gould; \textit{Religion for New generation}, P.69, Macmillan co. New York, 1973
\item \textsuperscript{15} Geertz, C., “Religion as a Cultural System” in Banton, M., (ed), \textit{Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion}, (London: Travistock Publications Ltd., 1968), reprint copy, p.3.
\end{itemize}
sense or reason enables man to apprehend the infinite under different names and under varying guises.”

Lactantius and Augustine states, “religion is derived from the bond of piety because God has established an inextricable relationship with man. Religion has an integrating function by binding human beings to one another and by binding them all to, even more inclusive, transcendent reality.” All individuals of human culture would acknowledge that religion is one of the most important factors in human society. Not only is it found in every human society, it also significantly interacts with other cultural institutions. It finds its expressions in material culture, in human behavior and in value system, morals and ethics. It also interacts within the institution of family and clan, marriage, law and politics. Needless to say religion fulfills an important social function in human life.

Religion seems to mean so many different things to people in different parts of the world. In fact, it is a permeating feature of the continuing history of mankind. To some, it is a superstitious barrier of man’s progress; to others, it is their most constructive activity providing an ultimate meaning to the projects of their culture.

Today we have an obligation to define Religion in the context of the scientific knowledge that we have been able to attain. We have to see if religion can get a proper place in the modern set up. The old superstitions of religions, its dogmatic faith, must not be allowed to go against scientific reason and experience. If the definition of religion does not take into consideration the facts of the modern life and actions and keep on describing religion in the ancient or traditional way; we will be giving only an unrealistic and outdated picture of religion.

The concept of religion is vague and full of complexities and ambiguity. Thoughts about religion brings to our mind, ideas about God, belief, ritual, worship, festivals, etc but none of these constitutes the essence of religion. Religion is to be understood as a practical system of belief in something which human beings considered to be beyond themselves and which bind them together so as to organize their lives into some sort of socio-religious community. Even though the core of religion is a system of belief, in its practical approach, religion becomes a practical system of belief, according to which humans organize their lives individually and collectively.

From the above description and explanation of the term ‘religion’, we can arrive at the following conclusion:

Religion, though individualistic in its essence as well as experience of a unique kind, preferably with a supreme power called God, it is explanatory as well as descriptive since the revelations of the individual devout soul (whom we reverentially call a devotee or a
saint) contains references to his intimate rapport with God, his psychological and biological modifications, his withdrawal from the material world. Thus the religion of mankind authentically asserts its obligation to society. For man cannot live in isolation. He influences the society and is being influenced by the society. The religious experience of one individual has its impact on the notion of ‘religious institution’ where there is a kind of congregation of the devotees especially in the organisation of several festive occasions. If any religion that does not fulfill the social requirements of any region, gradually it will disappear. Hence religion in its application is society-oriented. It not only does expand the horizon of practice and experience of a particular deity, but also enriches the moral dimension of human living. For, according to Mathew Arnold, ‘religion is morality tinged with emotion.’ Also immorality will seldom lead to immortality.

Now we shall proceed to analyze the nature of morality and its relation to religion.

**B. What is Morality?**

Morality is a complex system of general principles and particular judgments based on cultural, religious, and philosophical concepts and beliefs. Cultures and or groups regulate and generalize these concepts, thus regulating behavior. When someone conforms to the codification, you consider this person to be moral. Morality is the quality of being in accord with standards of right or good conduct or a system of ideas that fall into those same categories. We often hear words about religious morality or the phrase Christian morality in society. Items that fall into the morally sound category are qualities
like good, goodness, rightness, virtue, and righteousness. When talking about a moral quality involving a course of action, we think of ethics. To define morality, a person will use the rules or habits with regard to right and wrong that he or she follows. The notion of how we ought to behave and the reality of how we do behave are varied and real morality behaves in accordance with one's perception of morality. Often, doctrines or moral duties that support the quality of an action which renders it good, is moral.

Morality depends upon sanctions in this life or any other. The moral judgment is ultimate and immediate, it is autonomous. It is not dependent upon any specific religious doctrine. Conduct that is moral is the conduct that is likely to lead to the most satisfactory situation in the long run.

1. Morality a Mystery

Each one of us has grown in a world in which moral judgments already exist. These judgments are passed day by day by everyone on the conduct of everyone else. Some approve and some disapprove the acts. So deeply it goes, we apply the judgment to our own conduct. When we fail in our own judgment, we habitually apply to others, we feel “guilty”. Our conscience bothers us. None of us can remember when we first began to pass judgment of moral approval or disapproval. From our infant stage, we face it. One might ask, “Why should one be moral?” The question is rational yet it seems to be strange. The development of morality came about as wherever human beings live, there are decisions to be made – right and wrong ways of tactic, problem of conduct, wherever
people live in orderly social life, there are agreements, understanding and regulations by approval of group. Morality teaches us that what is good must be good for something and what is good for nothing is not good at all.

2. Origin of the Word

Morality is derived from the Latin word “mores” and ethics from the Greek word “eiotha” and “ethos”. Both these words are often considered synonymous; it is perhaps helpful to observe some kind of distinction between them. Morality is concerned directly with practical problems. It brings out the behaviour of individuals and societies according to customs and traditions. But ethics attempts to study the underlined ethos and pattern of the variety of moral decisions made by individuals and societies in a reflective manner. Ethics is a systematized theory in philosophy whereas morality is concerned about practical issues - behaviorism. \(^{20}\) But both morality and ethics are concerned with harmonizing human society, philosophically and customarily.

3. Defining Morality

The term “morality” can be defined either:

1. Descriptively to refer to some codes of conduct put forward by a society or, some other group, such as a religion, or accepted by an individual for her own behavior or

\(^{20}\) Hoggs makes similar distinction between ethics and morality. *Advaita and Ethics*, M.C.C.M.N.S. 16 (6) Dec. 1916., p.281.
2. Normatively to refer to a code of conduct that, given specified conditions, would be put forward by all rational persons.

a. Descriptive Definition of Morality

The descriptive definition of “morality” is the one used by anthropologists when they report on the morality of the societies that they study. Recently, some comparative and evolutionary psychologists (Haidt, Hauser, and De Waal) have taken morality, or a close anticipation of it, to be present among groups of non-human animals, primarily other primates but not limited to them. “Morality” has also been taken to refer to any code of conduct that a person or group takes as most important. The original descriptive definition of “morality” refers to the most important code of conduct put forward by a society and accepted by the members of that society. When the examination of large diverse societies raised problems for this original descriptive definition, different descriptive definitions were offered in which “morality” refers to the most important code of conduct put forward and accepted by any group, or even by an individual. Apart from containing some prohibitions on harming some others, different moralities can differ from each other quite extensively. “Morality” when used in a descriptive sense has an essential feature that morality in the normative sense does not have, namely, that it refers to codes of conduct that are actually put forward and accepted by some society, group, or individual.
“Morality” is an unusual word. It is not used very much, at least not without some qualification. People do sometimes talk about Christian morality, Nazi morality, or about the morality of the Greeks, but they seldom talk simply about morality all by itself. Consistent with this way of talking, many anthropologists used to claim that morality, like law, applies only within a society. They claimed that “morality” refers to that code of conduct that is put forward by a society. However, even in small homogeneous societies that have no written language, distinctions are sometimes made among morality, etiquette, law, and religion. So, even for these anthropologists “morality” does not often refer to every code of conduct put forward by a society.

Etiquette is sometimes included as a part of morality, but it applies to norms that are considered less serious than the kinds of norms for behavior that are part of morality in the basic sense. Hobbes expresses the standard view when he discusses manners. “By manners I mean not here decency of behavior, as how one man should salute another, or how a man should wash his mouth or pick his teeth before company, and such other points of small morals, but those qualities of mankind that concern their living together in peace and unity.”

Law or a legal system is distinguished from morality or a moral system by having explicit written rules, penalties, and officials who interpret the laws and apply the penalties. Although there is often considerable overlap in the conduct governed by morality and

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that governed by law, laws are often evaluated on moral grounds. Moral criticism is often used to support a change in the law. Some have even maintained that the interpretation of law must make use of morality.\textsuperscript{22}

When “morality” is used simply to refer to a code of conduct put forward by any actual group, including a society, whether it is distinguished from etiquette, law, and religion, then it is being used in a descriptive sense. It is also being used in the descriptive sense when it refers to important attitudes of individuals. Just as one can refer to the morality of the Greeks, one can refer to the morality of a particular person. This descriptive use of “morality” is now becoming more prominent because of the work of psychologists who have been influenced by the views of David Hume, who tried to present a naturalistic account of moral judgments.\textsuperscript{23}

Ethical relativists hold that only when the term “morality.” is used in this descriptive sense there is something that “morality” actually refers to, namely, a code of conduct put forward by a society.\textsuperscript{24} They claim that it is a mistake to take “morality.” to refer to a universal code of conduct that, under some plausible conditions, would be endorsed by all rational persons.

\textsuperscript{22} Dworkin, Ronald, \textit{Law's Empire} (Legal Theory), 1986, Belknap Press.p.96
b. Normative Definition of Morality

Among those who use “morality” normatively, all hold that “morality” refers to a code of conduct that applies to all who can understand it and can govern their behavior by it. In the normative sense, morality should never be overridden, that is, no one should ever violate a moral prohibition or requirement for non-moral considerations. All of those who use “morality” normatively hold that, under plausible specified conditions, all rational persons would endorse that code.

The only feature that the descriptive and normative senses of “morality” have in common is that they refer to guides to behavior that involve, at least in part, avoiding and preventing harm to some others.

“Natural law” theories of morality claim that any rational person in any society, even one that has a defective morality, can know the general kinds of actions that morality prohibits, requires, discourages, encourages, and allows. In the theological version of natural law theories, such as that put forwards by Aquinas, this is because God has implanted this knowledge in the reason of all persons. In the secular version of natural law theories, such as that put forward by Hobbes, natural reason is sufficient to allow all rational persons to know what morality prohibits, requires, etc.25 Natural law theorists also claim that morality applies to all of rational persons, not only to those now living,

but also to those who lived in the past. These are not empirical claims about morality; they are claims about what is essential to morality, or about what is meant by “morality” when it is used normatively. Other moral theories do not hold quite so strong a view about the universality of knowledge of morality, but many hold that morality is known to all who can be legitimately judged by it.

Morality is a public system, that is, it is a system that is known to all those to whom it applies and it is not irrational for any of those to whom it applies to follow it. Moral judgments of blame thus differ from legal or religious judgments of blame in that they are not made about persons who are legitimately ignorant of what they are required to do. Act consequentially seem to hold that everyone should know that they are morally required to act so as to bring about the best consequences, but even they do not think judgments of moral blame are appropriate if a person is legitimately ignorant of what action will bring about the best consequences.26 Parallel views seem to be held by rule consequentialists.27

On all accounts of morality, it is a code of conduct. However, on ethical or group relativist accounts or on individualistic accounts, apart from avoiding and preventing harm, morality has no special content or a feature that distinguishes it from nonmoral codes of conduct, such as law or religion. Just as a legal code of conduct can have almost

any content, as long as it is capable of guiding behavior, and a religious code of conduct has no limits on content, all of the relativist and individualist accounts of morality, have almost no limit on the content of a moral code. However, for those who hold that morality is a code of conduct that all rational persons would put forward for governing the behavior of all moral agents, it has a fairly definite content.\(^{28}\) Kant, in accordance with the German word “moral” that is used to translate the English word “morality,” regards morality as prohibiting harming oneself as well as prohibiting harming others.\(^{29}\) Hobbes, Bentham, Mill, and most other non-religiously influenced philosophers in the Anglo-American tradition, limit morality to behavior that, directly or indirectly, affects others.

Among those philosophers who use “morality” to refer to a universal guide that all rational persons who are fallible and vulnerable would put forward for governing the behavior of all moral agents, the differences in content are less significant than their similarities. For all of these philosophers, such as Kurt Baier, Philippa Foot, and Geoffrey Warnock, morality prohibits actions such as killing, causing pain, deceiving, and breaking promises. For some, morality also requires charitable actions, but failure to act charitably on every possible occasion does not require justification in the same way that any act of killing, causing pain, deceiving, and breaking promises requires justification. Both Kant and Mill distinguish between duties of perfect obligation and duties of imperfect obligation and regard not harming as the former kind of duty and helping as the

latter kind of duty.\textsuperscript{30} For Gert, morality encourages charitable action, but does not require it; it is always morally good to be charitable, but it is not immoral not to be charitable.\textsuperscript{31}

Morality is concerned with promoting people living together in peace and harmony, which includes obeying the rules prohibiting causing harm to others. Although the prohibitions against those actions that cause harm or significantly increase the risk of harm are not absolute, in order to avoid acting immorally, justification is always needed when violating these prohibitions. This distinguishes violations of moral rules from all other kinds of actions. Kant seems to hold that it is never justified to violate some of these prohibitions, e.g., the prohibition against lying, those who hold that the principle of utility provides the foundation of the moral rules, such as Mill, hold that it is justified to violate these rules only when the overall direct and indirect consequences would be better. The Natural Law tradition holds that all rational persons know what kinds of actions morality prohibits, requires, discourages, encourages, and allows. They also hold that reason endorses acting morally. Even religious thinkers in this tradition, such as Aquinas, hold that morality is known to all those, whose behavior is subject to moral judgment, even if they do not know of the revelations of Christianity.

Hobbes, who is included in the secular natural law tradition, says, “the writers of moral philosophy, though they acknowledge the same virtues and vices,” complains that they do


not see, “wherein consisted their goodness, nor that they come to be praised as the means of peaceable, sociable, comfortable living, place them in the mediocrity of the passions.”

The intuitive, no less than what may be termed the inductive school of ethics, insists on the necessity of general laws. They both accept that the morality of an individual action is not a question of direct perception, but of the application of a law to an individual case. They recognize also, to a great extent, the same moral laws; but differ as to their evidence, and the source from which they derive their authority. Morality requires doing that act that would result in the best overall consequences, even though, given that the consequences of all acts continue forever, no human being can possibly know what act would result in the best overall consequences over time.

The ideal situation for a legal system is also that it is a public system, but in any large society that is not the case, and sometimes people are held legally responsible for following rules about which they are legitimately ignorant, and even when it is irrational for them to follow those rules. Games are closer to being public systems and most adults playing a game know its rules, or they know that there are judges whose interpretation determines what behavior the game prohibits, requires, etc. Although a game is often a

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public system, it applies only to those playing the game. If a person does not care enough about the game to abide by the rules, that person can usually quit. Morality is the one public system that no rational person can quit.

When the concept of morality is completely distinguished from religion, moral rules do seem to be limited to behavior that directly or indirectly causes harm to others. Some behavior that seems to affect only oneself, e.g., taking recreational drugs, may have a significant indirect harmful effect on others by supporting the illegal and harmful activity of those gangs that benefit from the sale of those drugs. Confusion about the content of morality arises because morality is not always distinguished from religion. Regarding self-affecting behavior as governed by morality is supported by the idea that we are created by God and are obliged to obey his commands, and so may be a holdover from the time when morality was not clearly distinguished from religion.

The normative sense of “morality” refers to a universal guide to behavior that, in plausible specified conditions, all rational persons would put forward for governing the behavior of all moral agents. Thus it is important to know what is meant by “rational person.” In this context, “rational person” refers to a person insofar as he is acting rationally in the sense described previously. Such a person must have sufficient knowledge and intelligence to understand what kinds of actions morality prohibits, requires, discourages, encourages, and allows, and also must have sufficient volitional ability to use morality as a guide for their behavior. Such rational persons seek to avoid
any harm to themselves unless they believe that their action will result in someone, themselves or others, avoiding a comparable harm or gaining a compensating good. People lacking these characteristics are not subject to moral judgment. If they lack them only temporarily, and are not responsible for the lack, they might be excused from moral judgments in those cases. All such rational persons are moral agents.

The proposed normative definition of “morality” is controversial, but it does have some features that should be widely accepted. The definition allows as meaningful the commonly asked question, “Why should I be moral?” It is also compatible with the commonly held view that it is not always irrational to be immoral; however it guarantees that it is never irrational to be moral. This definition also explains why we want others to act morally and why others want us to act morally. It, thus, does what definitions of referring terms are supposed to do: it clarifies this term's relationship to other terms with which it is related, and helps to explain why we use the word in the way that we do.

C. Religion and Morality: related but distinct

Religion has a co-ordinating and integrating function in the long history of human civilization. The social life of a primitive man is the common matrix in which both the moral and religious tendencies were initiated. The interpenetration of the sacred and the
secular was so intense in primitive society that the demarcation of the boundaries between them made little sense in the ancient religious context.35

Woodburne writes “undifferentiated social consciousness was the matrix out of which both the moral consciousness and the religious consciousness developed”36. Further, religion and morality are indistinguishably interrelated not in a speculative way but in factual and historical situations and both are together developed within the sphere of social attitudes of the undifferentiated continuum of human civilization37. The rules and regulations of behavior are worked out on the basis of indissoluble union with the unseen, giving the code of conduct a magical-religious authority. So there is a continuous interaction prevailing between moral experience and the religious beliefs of the people. What they have in common is that they are fundamental to the ways of life of an individual or a society.

Both religion and morality are universal phenomena and as such they affect many a side of man’s culture and life. In fact, belief and behavior mutually modify and support each other. There is a well-marked tendency “both for the concept of the supernatural to become moralized and for the morality to acquire a religious sanction.”38 One could

35 In the account of creation in the book of Genesis the secular phenomena like work, marriage and language have the divine sanction and participation. The incarnation theology also brings out the fact that the secular and the sacred are interfused.
37 Ibid., p. 235.
hardly come across a religion without moral values. A religion is considered to be “higher or lower according to the kind of morality it engenders in its followers.”\textsuperscript{39} Chatterji argues that “morality culminates in religion and religion finds its practical expressions in morality.”\textsuperscript{40}

Religion and morality closely resemble each other and both control human behavior considerably. Morality has been known for its progressiveness in the sense that it has contributed to gradual purification of many of the crude forms of religion. Religion, with its sacred sanctions and symbols, has strengthened the role of morality. It is usually claimed by religious people that morality cannot survive long without the support of religion. As it is religion which validates moral values and under girds moral attitudes. In other words, religious beliefs and commitments of the people of a faith “give a point to moral endeavor.”\textsuperscript{41}

In the history of human civilization, with all its complexities, openness and possibilities, the relationship of religion with morality may be stated as having areas of significant overlapping and congruity between them in practice, if not in theory as well, although they can be distinguished from each other. Various philosophers in the history of philosophy had expressed numerous views on the relation of religion and morality.

\textsuperscript{39} Masih,Y. Introduction to Religious Philosophy, (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass, 1971) p.22.
\textsuperscript{40} Chatterji,P. Principles of Ethics. (Calcutta, 1935) p.28.
Geisler enumerates four significant differences between religion and morality claiming that religious commitment is broader in scope, different in kind, higher in order and greater in its impact upon the lives of people\textsuperscript{42}. Geisler’s point of view when he says that mystical experiences of religious traditions cannot be easily formulated and that they go beyond the purely ethical\textsuperscript{43}.

1. Can Morality be Understood without Religion?

In the modern era mankind is experiencing of an age, and in it numerous impossibilities have become possibilities in various aspects of life due to development of human thought, science and technology. Even some philosophers have voiced their views saying “morality could replace religion”. Religion is gradually losing its creditability to provide a steadfast moral pattern. Records of the past history of religion have information of conflicts with morality and human welfare. To cite a few examples - Sati. Jihad. Crusades were all some of the moral outrageous behavior carried out in the name of religion. People in the developed countries are gradually rejecting religious prejudice.

Thinkers like Bertrand Russell, John Dewey, Herbert Spencer and Margaret Knight express their opinions against any connection between religion and morality and advocate morality without religion, secular morality, scientific humanism and unselfish principles which can build strong harmony within human society. If there have been outrageous

behaviors carried out in the name of religion, it shows that man is sinful in nature and that religion have been used by evil man to validate their evil ways. It may be noted that, in Niebuhrian analysis of human nature, man suffers from pride and selfishness, though he has the possibility to transcend himself and transform the society with religious resources of grace and love.

Human nature, being what it is, cannot provide proper foundation, without a source of grace and power available outside man’s capabilities in the rich religious heritage, for building a stable universal brotherhood. Secular morality and scientific humanism, without a proper religious or metaphysical basis, cannot really bridge the gap between man and his neighbour. Without a doubt, man cannot really sacrifice love and live without selfishness unless there is some strong motivation which he experiences from religious practices. Tenderness, compassion and amiability of temperament are often only the attires of basic values of love infused in religious traditions. Justice may be considered to be the peak of secular morality, but it is inculcated with limitations since everyone in the modern society has the tendency to claim his/her rights. But the sacrificial love (Agape) taught in the religious traditions goes beyond the demands of duty and rights. In response to Russell’s understanding of morality, Macgregor emphasizes, “intellectual acumen alone does nothing in itself to empower a man to

experience the sacrificial love apart from which religion is warped and morality emasculated”45.

R.S. Downie puts forward a “metaphysical thesis” to show how morality points itself and exists for the sake of some greater end46. Downie illustrates his thesis on the basis of Good Samaritan story recorded in the New Testament47. The Samaritan comes across a Jew in great need, robbed, striped, beaten and left half dead. The Samaritan attends to him and takes great care of him, overcoming all man-made barriers, which existed between a Jew and a Samaritan based on religion, race and regionalism. Without a doubt the Samaritan helped the Jew in distress, as he was moved with universal selflessness of the brotherhood of man. Then as Downie observes, there is an additional reason for such noble action of the Good Samaritan, when this citation is observed in its right context. The Samaritan helps the man in distress as he comes across a son of God who commands to love his neighbour as himself. This story brings out a metaphysical thesis that the ideal brotherhood of man is motivated by the implication of the fatherhood of God48.

Secular morality has a firmer foundation in religious morality. This gives out a clue that ethical systems, under close scrutiny reveals that they have appealed in one way or other to the authority or insight of a religion. Tillich puts the emphasis on ontological

47 St. Luke 10:25-37
48 Downie, R.S. op. cit., p.20.
dependence of morality on religion, as he argues that the relation between religion and morality is “not an external one, but that the religious dimension, source and motivation are implicit in all morality, acknowledged or not”\(^{49}\).

Even the moral philosophers agree on the relevance of religion to practical purposes of morality. Sociologists agree that the beliefs and the cultic practices of a group are intimately connected with the group’s moral values. Norms of morality of any given group may be traced to a belief in an immediate divine order, with the continued observance of those laws acting as “a most powerful cement of a moral community”\(^{50}\).

Modern societies are complex and considerably secularized. Therefore religious derivation of the moral and legal codes is less direct and not clear. Elizabeth Nottingham writes, “The moral codes which appeared to be secular now were originally sanction on religious grounds, even though their religious origin may be forgotten”\(^{51}\).

Further, W.E. Arnett writes that some moralists, who have concluded that there is no logical relation between religion and morality, claim that religion is justified as “an indispensable support of morality”, as it is “instrumentally necessary and altogether effective as a psychological or sociological means of strengthening moral beliefs and


encouraging patterns of beneficent behaviour”\textsuperscript{52}. Religion without morality is not an acceptable proposition due to the following reasons.

1. Love becomes an essential foundation for both religion and morality.
2. Religious virtues are already firmly rooted in morality.
3. The secular morality has its origin in religious premises though modern man fails to accept it due to his preoccupation with secularism.

2. Is Religion Being a Visible Character of Morality Inappropriate?

This question can be called the reductionist view. According to them, the moral element is the only element of value and it is the essence of religion and all other aspects of religion are superfluous. Mathew Arnold’s definition of religion as morality tinged with emotion is one of the classical expressions of this view. R.B. writes that the many fables, rituals and other apparatus of religion obscure the fundamental moral aspects of religion\textsuperscript{53}. From an empiricist’s point of view, any hypothesis of the scientist or the religious teacher has value only in so far as it is verifiable by actual experience. Religious statements do not have place in the trilogy of statements about matters of empirical facts, scientific hypothesis related to empirical facts and the logically essential statement of logic and mathematics\textsuperscript{54}. Therefore, the logical positivists find nothing but meaninglessness in the volumes of religious and metaphysical statements. The moral statements, however, are meaningful since they spell out the way one proposes to act.

\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Ibid}. p.55.
Religious principles have to be reduced to moral principles, assigning no special meaning to myth, liturgies and other unverifiable categories of religious apparatus.

In Braithwaite’s reductionist view, religion can be described as “morals helped out by mythology”\textsuperscript{55}. Braithwaite illustrates the religious statement, “God is Love”, and appeals to the mental attitude and commitment of the religious person to a new order of the \textit{agape} way of life\textsuperscript{56}. In Braithwaite’s view \textit{agape} refers partly to external behaviour…yet being filled with \textit{agape} includes more than behaving agapeistically externally; it also includes an agapeistic frame of mind\textsuperscript{57}.” That is, the impact of self-giving love, \textit{agape}, is “from judgment of conduct to judgment of character, from rightness to goodness, doing to being, and rule to virtue.”\textsuperscript{58} The agapeistic way of life implies not only external conduct but also an internal transformation with an agapeistic frame of mind.

In Braithwaite’s own words:

\begin{quote}
A moral belief is an intention to behave in a certain way: a religious belief is an intention to behave in a certain way (a moral belief) together with the entertainment of certain stories associated with the intention in the mind of the believer.\textsuperscript{59}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{56} From the Greek word, \textit{agape}, meaning sacrificial love.
\textsuperscript{57} Ramsey, I., \textit{op. cit.}, p.65.
\textsuperscript{58} Outka, G., Agape: An Ethical Analysis, (New Haven: Yale University, 1972), p.124.
\textsuperscript{59} Ramsey, I., \textit{op. cit.}, p.71.
Braithwaite seeks “a common ground” between religious thinkers and logical positivist and explains his position from non-theological standpoint. He succeeds in his attempt, to an extent, at establishing high analytical standards, using the tools of symbolic logic and the analysis of science, in studying the problem of the philosophy of religion.

After viewing the contributions of the reductionist, it becomes essential to consider the inadequacy of the methodology employed by Braithwaite. First of all, religious literature has a variety of information and it is too narrow for the religious thinkers to reduce religion to a morality “coloured and reinforced by a particular tail.” Secondly, the doctrine of any religion should be taken with the basic tenets of the founder and the scripture as their basis. Commitment of a believer in the Christian faith is primarily not “to agape or to agapeistic way of life” but to Christ, the way, the truth and the life. Thirdly, though we cannot give up the logic and power of argument in issues pertaining to philosophy and religion, it should be admitted that religious experience need not provide sense-data for verification according to empiricism nor the simple concepts to satisfy human logic. Macquarrie is right in his judgment of the reductionist view that Braithwaite has “exaggerated his thesis beyond what is plausible.” Braithwaite’s methodology is inadequate and consequently the view that religion is an aspect of morality is inappropriate.

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60 Ibid. p.77.
62 Ibid. p.28
63 Ibid. pp22-24; and Ramsey, I., op. cit., p.86.
64 The religious experience of the encounter of St. Thomas with the risen Christ in the Gospel according to St. John provides him a greater reality of supersensible by faith than his empirical experiment based on sense-data. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believed (St. John 20:29).
3. Religion and Morality: Related or Unrelated?

Religion and morality are not identical; nor is one a part of the other. They are mutually exclusive. Alexander’s position is not far from this view as he claims that religion and morality are two distinct sentiments.\textsuperscript{66} He goes on to say that religion and morality were not distinguished in the primitive mind even as all branches of science had their beginning in philosophy; but now “the sentiment of religion and the sense of moral values are distinct, in a far greater degree than philosophy is distinct from physics which was separated out of philosophy.”\textsuperscript{67} In other words, according to Alexander, there can be religion without morality and morality without religion and they are two distinct sentiments, however closely they might have been once related.\textsuperscript{68}

Independence of morality from religion is one of the extreme theoretical positions. According to Tillich, disjointedness between religion and morality is only artificial, as they are metaphysically related. Tillich argues:

\begin{quote}
Religious values such as forgiveness and acceptance, the conditions of the fulfilment of the law, must come from something above the law, or more precisely, from something in which the split between our essential being and our existence is overcome and healing power has appeared.\textsuperscript{69}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., p.404f.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., p.405.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid.15., p.60
Maquarrie states, “In one form or another, phenomena such as sin and grace, faith and hope, are known far beyond the boundaries of an explicit theology.”

Having noticed the many difficulties in accepting the view that religion and morality are not related, it is but natural that one should consider the next view that religion and morality are not unrelated but related. With a closer look, we find that morality is so closely related to religion in practice, if not in theory as well, that both have significant areas of overlapping and congruity, although they can be distinguished from each other. This position is not much different from that of theist.

A.E. Taylor claims that moral knowledge is such that it presupposes necessarily the being of God who controls the immortality of the soul and the universe with moral purpose. According to Taylor, moral experience points beyond itself to, as is completed in religion, and one is naturally led to theism. Taylor’s attempt to move from the facts of moral experience to a religious metaphysics indicates two main considerations: first, he is keen on eternal good and not merely temporal achievements. Human aspirations by themselves are doomed to frustrations. Secondly, man is guilty and sinful and without divine grace, he is impotent and helpless to achieve his moral fulfillment and aspirations. Taylor puts forth his thesis that moral life finds its completion in religion and man’s

72 Ibid.
indefatigable attempt to reach eternal good is met by the initiative of the eternal. Moral life without religion is distorted and self-stultifying\textsuperscript{73}.

In the theistic tradition, the understanding of the personality in God is of great significance. For a theist, morality is an inevitable by-product of religion. The theist rejects the ideas of taking religion and morality as disjoint phenomena. They can never accept morality as an independent entity. Keith Ward states that one way of overcoming the dichotomy-dilemma is “to identify the will of God with the ‘realm of values’ which constitutes the goodness of things.”\textsuperscript{74} From the theistic point of view, the highest ethical rules are only the grammar of God’s will for man, God commands us to do what is intrinsically right and to avoid what is intrinsically wrong. For, God is not only omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient but is also morally perfect. It is incompatible to imagine the supernatural moralist giving evil comments.

Religion and morality are intimately connected with overlapping areas. Moral consciousness itself is a mode of religious consciousness. There is much meaning that “genuine moral commitment is itself religious in quality.”\textsuperscript{75} Further, man is a moral being. He cannot be justified in his going against conscience. It is impossible to think of human without a trace of morality. In the theistic tradition, religion can never be divorced from morality and it is more than morality, and can never be reduced to morality totally,

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid. p.230f.
not even to the most supreme development of the moral will. These views give us a proper basis to consider a contemporary discussion on the relationship between Christianity and morality.

The religious and moral experience of the people cannot be taken out of the cultural, historical, cultic and experiential context in which the moral lives of religious persons are lived. The teaching of Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1774-1833), a great exponent of Indian renaissance and rationalism, the founder of Brahmo Samaj and a reformer, who worked towards permanent abolition of Sati, may be considered in this context. He was greatly attracted by the moral precepts of Jesus which he gleaned from the four Gospels. In Roy, the moral law is “principally inculcated” by the Christian faith. He lays emphasis so much on morality that metaphysics has little relevance for him. He says “moral doctrines are beyond the reach of metaphysical perversion and intelligible alike to the learned and unlearned.” He claims that his work on the “Percepts of Jesus” separated from “mysterious dogmas” was an attempt to study the intimate relationship of Christianity with morality. In his words, “This simple code of religion and morality…is so admirably calculated to elevate men’s ideas to high and liberal notions of one God.”

As we look further into the relationship of Christianity with morality, the Biblical morality cannot be rooted out. The commandment of Jesus combines religion and

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77 *Ibid.* p.4
78 *Ibid.* p.69
morality, as “neighbour-love involves substantiative overlap with the love for God.” 79 Jesus articulates the two central principles of ethics by combining love for God with the love for one’s neighbour. Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount illustrates the central principles of his teachings, demanding radical obedience to God and radical concern for one’s neighbour. This combination of religion with morality influences other writers of the New Testament with the linking concept of love. Paul writes “Love is the fulfilling of the Law”; John says, if man says ‘I Love God’, and hates his brother, he is a liar”; and James calls this commandment “the royal law” the Mosaic Law or the Ten Commandment are fulfilled by following the commandments of loving one’s neighbour as oneself. 80 Though love is an instinct, in its execution or expression, it has a socio-religious and moral involvement.

The moral commands, known as the Ten Commandments, lay not only the foundation of social ethics, but they are also ‘religious’ in character demanding man that “love God with every part and fibre of his being and that he must also love his neighbour as himself.” 81 Biblical religion combines responsibilities toward God and towards Man; for without responsibility towards man, religion would become remote and unrelated to basic tenets of human solidarity and without responsibility towards God society can become introverted, materialistic and dehumanized. 82 Both these responsibilities are brought together in Jesus’ teaching of the summary of the Ten Commandments by the concept of

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80 Romans 13:10, 1 John 4:20 and James 2:8
82 Ibid.
self-giving love. Within the heritage of the Bible, love (agape) can never be separated from justice. Justice is a form through which love performs its work. Clinton Gardner asserts the intimate relationship between love and justice saying, “To divorce love from justice is to turn into pious sentimentality so that instead of being more than justice it ends up being less than justice.”

With the views and discussions asserted the distinct areas between religion and morality cannot be ignored while emphasizing the areas which are harmonious. The biblical morality permits a teleological suspension of the ethical as Kierkegaard interprets the incident of Abraham’s preparedness to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, justifying him teleologically “In suspending the ethical obligation towards his son.” A purely religious experience of Abraham’s faith in God is justified in the higher order of morality, demonstrating his willingness to sacrifice his unique possession to the God of his faith.

The biblical morality also accepts the liberation of the people of Israel from bondage and exile in Babylon as moral and religious act in the sixth century B.C by a Persian king Cyrus who had no connection with Judaism. As a matter of fact, the liberator Cyrus is

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84 Kierkegaard, S., “Is there such a Thing as a Teleological Suspension of the Ethical”, Arnett, W.E., (ed), A Modern Reader in the Philosophy of Religion, op. cit., p. 159ff.
called “God’s anointed” or the Christ, the very title given later to Jesus of Nazareth.” A purely moral experience in this incident is thus understood theologically.

The view with its common as well as distinct areas between religion and morality is applicable to the Biblical morality and consequently to the overall contemporary thinkers of our modern times.

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85 Isaiah 44:28: 45.1. Also see St. Matthew 25:31-46 where service to the needy is considered service to Christ.